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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: NUR OTAN DEPUTY CHAIR LAYS OUT HIS PRIORITIES

REF: A. 09 ASTANA 1516  
[1](#)B. 09 ASTANA 2148

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[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: The recently-appointed Deputy Chairman of President Nazarbayev's ruling Nur Otan party (Nazarbayev is the Chairman) told the Ambassador on January 19 that Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship is a sign of its growing international standing. He raised Kazakhstan's desire for a meeting between Presidents Obama and Nazarbayev during the April Global Nuclear Security Summit. He detailed Nur Otan's plan to send a delegation to Washington in March to learn about organization and strategy from U.S. political parties. Nur Otan has recently shifted focus onto the regions to ensure that "the people see the government doing something." Nigmatulin categorically denied that this increased activity suggests the party is getting ready for early elections. The Ambassador stressed the need to fulfill some of the goals laid out in the "Human Rights Action Plan for 2009-2012" (ref A). END SUMMARY.

"HISTORIC YEAR"

[1](#)3. (SBU) On January 19, the Ambassador met with the Deputy Chairman of the President's ruling Nur Otan party Nurlan Nigmatullin, who was appointed to his position on November 19, 2009. Nigmatulin called 2010 a "historic year" for Kazakhstan. The Chairmanship of the OSCE signifies the growing international standing of Kazakhstan and President Nazarbayev, he said. The Ambassador underlined U.S. support for Kazakhstan's priorities in all three OSCE dimensions and readiness to work with Kazakhstan to make its Chairmanship a success.

PUSH FOR NAZARBAYEV-OBAMA MEETING

[1](#)4. (SBU) Nigmatulin noted that a meeting between Presidents Obama and Nazarbayev during the April Global Nuclear Security Summit (GNSS) would "be a strong sign" of the cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United States and, he emphasized, would "serve as a base" for the future. He highlighted that UN General Assembly's recent adoption of Kazakhstan's proposal to make August 29, the day Kazakhstan officially renounced its nuclear arsenal, the

International Day against Nuclear Tests. The Ambassador expressed his certainty that President Nazarbayev will make an important contribution to the GNSS, especially because of Kazakhstan's strong non-proliferation record. The Ambassador said that the White House continues to develop the President's schedule and noted that over 40 heads of state are expected to attend the GNSS.

#### NUR OTAN TO VISIT WASHINGTON

15. (SBU) Nigmatulin told us that a Nur Otan delegation will travel to the United States in March on a working visit. The visit aims to establish links with U.S. political parties and learn more about election campaigns and platform development. Kazakhstan's embassy in Washington will also organize a round-table on Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship. Nigmatulin praised Nur Otan's cooperation with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI). The Ambassador affirmed the U.S. government's readiness to work with the Kazakhstani Embassy in Washington to make the delegation's trip successful and productive. He welcomed Nigmatulin's views on ways to increase the effectiveness of NDI and IRI's programs.

#### GOING TO THE PEOPLE

16. (SBU) The Ambassador asked Nigmatulin about his priorities for Nur Otan, specifically the party's anti-corruption campaign. (NOTE: Soon after taking office, Nigmatulin announced that the fight against corruption is his top priority. END NOTE.) Nigmatulin said the anti-corruption effort "will not lessen, and will, in fact, strengthen." He noted that having established its credentials nationally, Nur Otan has shifted focus to the regions. "The people must see and feel that the government is doing something," he

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stated. Fully agreeing, the Ambassador noted that cooperation between local civil-society NGOs and local governments to resolve local problems exemplifies democracy at work.

#### NO EARLY ELECTIONS

17. (SBU) The Ambassador asked Nigmatulin about the persistent rumors that the government will call early elections in 2010. Nigmatulin categorically denied a link between Nur Otan's increased activity in the regions and preparations for early elections. After asking his assistant to turn off two tape recorders left on the table by journalists present at the meeting's start, Nigmatulin told the Ambassador, with a more relaxed and confidential air, that he "knows all the oppositionists personally" and is familiar with the "election rumors that frequently appear" in the opposition press. "Let me reassure you that our increased activity is simply a political party at work," he stressed to the Ambassador.

#### "UNDER A SPOTLIGHT"

18. (SBU) The Ambassador asked about the implementation of the "Human Rights Action Plan for 2009-2012" (ref A) and stressed the need to address at least some of the plan's priorities during Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship. Nigmatulin responded, "Literally, I am flying to Almaty this afternoon to meet with academics and other specialists in Almaty to present Nur Otan's strategy, which will correspond in part to the Human Rights Action Plan's goals. The Ambassador noted that the OSCE Chairmanship has placed Kazakhstan "under a spotlight. Both positive and negative reports are inevitable," he stressed, "and Kazakhstan needs to take bold and concrete steps that increase the positive." Fully agreeing, Nigmatulin concluded, "Image is crucial, and we must fully realize we are under a hot spotlight."

#### BIO NOTE

19. (SBU) Born on August 31, 1962, in Karaganda, Kazakhstan, Nurlan Nigmatulin holds a degree from the Karaganda Polytechnic University. He worked only one year as an engineer before being selected to lead the Karaganda Komsomol (Soviet Young Communist Organization). After independence, Nigmatulin rose quickly in Kazakhstan's political circles, serving as the Deputy Head of Operations for the

Presidential Administration in 1995-1999, then as Deputy Akim (Mayor) of Astana in 1999-2002, followed by two years as Vice Minister of Transport and Communication, and returned to the Presidential Administration as Head of Human Resources in 2004-2006.

From 2006 until his most recent appointment, Nigmatulin was the governor of the Karaganda oblast. He proudly told the Ambassador, breaking into fairly fluent English, that Karaganda is "where Nazarbayev got his start" at the Temirtau Metallurgical Plant. Nigmatulin is married with three sons. His twin brother Yerlan is a member of parliament.

¶10. (SBU) COMMENT: Nur Otan officials unequivocally deny the possibility of early elections -- along with Nigmatulin, the party's Secretary Yerlan Karin told the DCM in December that there are no plans for elections before 2012 (ref B). However, even Karin admitted that "all depends on the Ak Orda" (Presidential Administration), and the President might choose to call elections at any moment. Nur Otan's consultation with civil society on ways to implement elements of the "Human Rights Action Plan" is noteworthy, but whether this will translate into concrete orders from the Presidency and action from the parliament, which Nur Otan fully controls, remains to be seen. We should certainly highlight this point when the party's delegation visits Washington in March. The more we can press on cracked-open doors, the more chance we will have for success. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND